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SENSITIVE

STATE FOR WHA/CAR (DHOFFMANN) (VDEPIRRO) (WSMITH)
WHA/EPSC (MROONEY) (FCORNEILLE)
EEB/ESC/IEC/EPC (MCMANUS)
SANTO DOMINGO FOR FCS AND FAS
TREASURY FOR ERIN NEPHEW
INR/RES (RWARNER)

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CU, XL

SUBJECT: JAMAICA: OAS ASSISTANT SECRETARY GENERAL SAYS CUBA MUST
TAKE INITIATIVE TO REJOIN OAS, CALLS FOR GREATER CARICOM ATTENTION
TO HAITI

Summary

1. (U) Summary: In an informal June 5 press conference in Kingston, Organization of American States (OAS) Assistant Secretary General (ASG) Albert Ramdin of Suriname described as "historic" the recently-concluded 39th General Assembly (GA) session in San Pedro Sula, Honduras, that saw the rescinding of Resolution 6, the 1962 resolution that had effectively suspended Cuba from the OAS for 47 years. Although the obstacles to Cuba rejoining the international system have now been removed, Ramdin made it clear that the next steps toward rapprochement must come from Havana. Ramdin also reaffirmed the OAS's commitment to Haiti and called on the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) to play a greater role in that country's development. End Summary.

Cuba and the San Pedro Sula Declaration

2. (U) Passing through Kingston en route to the U.S., the ASG hailed the assembly and the "visible commitment of its members to work together on all issues," including Cuba, Haiti, non-violence, crime, drugs, and the security in the Caribbean. Ramdin noted that the "positive mood" and "willing[ness] to work for consensus" established at April's Summit of the Americas (SOA) in Trinidad had provided a "mandate" and "set the stage" for what the GA had accomplished regarding Cuba.

3. (U) Ramdin described the OAS's Resolution 2438 as the San Pedro Sula Declaration, although its formal title is simply "Resolution on Cuba." Noting that the debate over Cuba's readmission to the OAS had been raised and faltered several times since 1962, Ramdin nevertheless described the resolution as "an expression of what was in the minds of many" in the OAS. Ramdin pointed out that "the world had changed in the 47 years since Resolution 6 was adopted" and that Cuba needs to rejoin the OAS and the Inter-American community. However, the ASG made it quite clear that the next steps must come from the Government of Cuba (GOC) and the Cuban people.

Inside Baseball

4. (U) The ASG provided considerable detail on the deliberations of the Cuba Working Group that had crafted the resolution at San Pedro Sula. Although several views had been expressed, Ramdin described a

"real desire for consensus" and noted that all participants, "including the U.S.", had made concessions. Historically, the U.S. had opposed rescinding Resolution 6, but Ramdin described an evolution of the U.S. position from one in which the U.S. "would support revocation of Article 6 at the end of a process" to one in which the U.S. "would support revocation of Article 6 at the beginning of a process." Others, most notably the member states (Venezuela, Nicaragua, Bolivia, Honduras, Dominica, and St. Vincent and Grenadines) constituting the Bolivarian Alternative for the People of our America (ALBA), had not wanted to include any mention of a "process" of reintegration in the resolution. Ramdin noted that CARICOM had played an "important role" independent of both the U.S. and ALBA in drafting the resolution, with both Jamaica and Belize participating in the Working Group.

15. (U) As is the norm for the OAS, the resolution had been adopted by the Working Group and the General Assembly through consensus, without any formal vote. The direct participation of Foreign Ministers in the Working Group on June 2 had "lifted the discussion to a higher level" and had ensured that the negotiations moved quickly toward consensus, since they could make decisions without waiting for direction from superiors. After consultations, the Working Group meeting had resumed the morning of June 3 and had approved the resolution by acclamation. Shortly thereafter, the resolution had been formally approved by the General Assembly. Although Secretary of State Hillary Clinton had departed the previous evening and left Assistant Secretary Thomas Shannon in charge of negotiations, Ramdin said that she had played "a critical role" and that he had appreciated Shannon's "frankness." The U.S. also compromised by not insisting that the resolution, drafted in Spanish, be translated before its release.

16. (U) Ultimately, Ramdin contended, the resolution proved that the

OAS is "relevant" and "can solve problems." The ASG noted that "now we must wait to see how Cuba will respond. The obstacle is gone, the ball is in their court, now the dialogue can start." As a result, OAS representatives are now free to visit Cuba, although Ramdin pointed out that there had never been a formal OAS policy preventing this, and he expressed hope that Cuba might allow an OAS office to be opened in Havana. In the meantime however, Ramdin hoped that the resolution would facilitate bilateral relations among member states and Cuba, and stressed that Cuba might benefit in some nonpolitical areas - educational exchanges, agricultural programs, disaster preparedness - without formally rejoining the OAS.

The Cuban Perspective

17. (U) Osvaldo Cardenas, the former Cuban Ambassador to Suriname from 1980-83 and now a sociologist and businessman living in Kingston, was present at the press conference and offered his thoughts as to how the Cuban leadership might perceive the resolution. While the OAS and the world may have changed since 1962, Cardenas noted, it is important to remember that Cuba's leadership - Fidel and Ral Castro - has not. As a result, the GOC still sees the dramatic events of the early 1960s - the breaking of diplomatic relations with Havana, the Bay of Pigs invasion, the Cuban Missile Crisis - very emotionally, and the 1962 Punta del Este resolution suspending Cuba's OAS membership as a personal rebuke to the Castros.

18. (U) Cardenas didn't believe that the GOC had fully considered the potential benefits of rejoining the OAS, but would likely interpret the U.S.'s concurrence with Resolution 2438 as a tacit admission that Cuba had a right to be a member of the OAS and that 1962's Resolution 6 had been wrong. Nevertheless, Cardenas didn't believe that serious discussions regarding Cuba's next step had yet taken place in the GOC and likely wouldn't any time soon, implying that the Castro brothers would have to leave the political scene in Cuba before any rapprochement with the OAS could take place. Cardenas contended that the new Obama administration was a "major challenge" to the regime and that the GOC was uncertain as to how to deal with the new president. Ramdin agreed that "biological pressure" and the passing of the "major ideology" of the Castros would be a major

impetus for change, and that such change must be nurtured, not forced.

Parsing the Language

¶9. (U) One audience member noted that the U.S. had initially insisted that the resolution include a reference to the Inter-American Democratic Charter, but that the final resolution made no mention of it: had the U.S. changed its position, and had the OAS rejected the charter? Ramdin replied that "nobody wanted to be blamed for the failure of this resolution," and that all participants, including the U.S. and the ALBA countries, had been committed to consensus. The ASG also maintained that the spirit of the Democratic Charter was evident in the resolution's language. In fact, Ramdin noted, the OAS has never invoked the charter overtly in its resolutions and contended that, in some ways, the language of the OAS charter is stronger than that of the Inter-American Democratic Charter. The ASG nevertheless insisted that the resolution's preamble was a strong statement affirming OAS principles.

¶10. (U) The same questioner then asked if Ramdin was worried that some Cuban-Americans have threatened to lobby Congress to target OAS funding over this issue. While Ramdin agreed that this was a theoretical possibility, he insisted that the OAS would not allow itself to be blackmailed by the U.S. Ultimately, the ASG concluded that such calls for retribution did not represent official U.S. policy, and that he wasn't overly concerned that the U.S. would cut OAS funding.

"Too Many Countries Say They Speak for Cuba..."

¶11. (U) Cuba's process toward reintegration into the OAS community will of necessity be a slow and methodical one, Ramdin pointed out, and based on the principles in the OAS's General Declaration of Human Rights. Most importantly, this process must be an expression

of the "voice of the Cuban people," Ramdin noted. "Too many countries say they speak for Cuba," Ramdin claimed. "Cuba needs to do so." The GOC has expressed no public interest in rejoining an organization that it has described as the U.S.'s "Ministry of Colonies," although both Ramdin and Cardenas agreed that the GOC and its ALBA allies had likely consulted in regard to the resolution. The ASG pointed out that Resolution 2438 includes no framework or process for Cuba's reintegration into the OAS, reaffirming that such a framework or process would be up to the GOC and the people of Cuba to initiate.

Haiti

¶12. (U) Ramdin noted that Haiti "has never enjoyed such solidarity in OAS," and expressed the desire to organize a mission to the country in August or September, 2009 to include representatives from the OAS, the International Development Bank (IDB), the Pan American Development Foundation (PADF), the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), as well as representatives from OAS member states, the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), members of the U.S. Congress, and international media, in order to showcase positive projects in Haiti that each participant had sponsored. Ramdin also said he'd like to see the OAS work with these same partners to sponsor an Inter-American Program in Haiti. "At some point, the U.N. mission will leave Haiti, and it will be a natural role for the OAS to step in and take over," Ramdin predicted.

¶13. (U) The ASG also expressed the hope that CARICOM would escalate its engagement and provide more leadership with Haiti, a CARICOM member. Although Haiti has enjoyed relative peace and stability recently, Ramdin expressed concern that next year's presidential elections might jeopardize these gains. Although CARICOM does not have much available in terms of resources, Ramdin felt that much could be accomplished through the personal intervention of CARICOM leaders. Ramdin pointed out that although Haiti has a strong commitment to CARICOM, many in the Government of Haiti (GOH) feel that the organization does not treat them as an equal member. The

ASG pointed out that Haiti is visited far more often by official visitors from the U.S., Canada, and Brazil than by CARICOM foreign ministers.

¶14. (U) Further economic and financial assistance to Haiti is necessary, Ramdin said, noting that Trinidad and Tobago had called for the OAS to establish a Hemispheric Development Fund for Haiti. Although Ramdin supported the concept in principle, he said that he would have to study the proposal more thoroughly to determine how to coordinate it with existing OAS programs.

Summary

¶15. (U) Ramdin went to great lengths to downplay any suggestion of discord over the resolution, choosing instead to praise the contributions of all participants in the working group and the spirit of consensus that he said had prevailed there. The ASG clearly felt that the next steps in Cuba's rapprochement with the OAS must come from the GOC and the Cuban people, although Ambassador Cardenas's comments suggested that those steps might be a long time in coming. Furthermore, Ramdin's discussion of Haiti before an audience clearly more interested in the Resolution on Cuba suggested that he feels very strongly about the OAS initiatives that he proposed toward that country.

Moss